

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## ES.I INTRODUCTION

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the United States (US) Department of the Interior (DOI), Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to develop and periodically revise or amend its resource management plans (RMPs), which guide management of BLM-administered lands. This RMP and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) describes and analyzes alternatives for the future management of public lands and resources that the BLM administers in the Miles City Field Office in eastern Montana.

The BLM Miles City Proposed Plan provides a layered management approach that offers the highest level of protection for Greater Sage-Grouse (GRSG) in the most valuable habitat. Land use allocations in the Proposed Plan would limit or eliminate new surface disturbance in Priority Habitat Management Areas (PHMA), while minimizing disturbance in General Habitat Management Areas (GHMA). In addition to establishing protective land use allocations, the Proposed Plan would implement a suite of management tools, such as disturbance limits, GRSG habitat objectives and monitoring, mitigation approaches, adaptive management triggers and responses, and other protective measures throughout the range. These overlapping and reinforcing conservation measures would work in concert to improve and restore GRSG habitat condition and provide consistency in how the BLM will manage activities in GRSG habitat in the planning area.

### ES.I.1 Rationale and Relationship to the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy

The Miles City RMP addresses the March 2010 US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) 12-Month Finding for Petitions to List the Greater Sage-Grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) (GRSG) as Threatened or Endangered (75 *Federal Register* 13910, March 23, 2010). In that finding, the USFWS concluded that GRSG was “warranted, but precluded” for listing as a threatened or endangered

species. A warranted, but precluded determination is one of three results that may occur after a petition is filed by the public to list a species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). This finding indicates that immediate publication of a proposed rule to list the species is precluded by higher-priority listing proposals; that is, a species should be listed based on the available science, but listing other species takes priority because they are more in need of protection.

The USFWS reviewed the status of and threats to the GRSG in relation to the five listing factors provided in Section 4(a)(1) of the ESA. Of the five listing factors reviewed, the USFWS determined that Factor A, “the present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of the habitat or range of the GRSG,” and Factor D, “the inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms,” posed “a significant threat to the GRSG now and in the foreseeable future” (75 *Federal Register* 13910, March 23, 2010). The USFWS identified the principal regulatory mechanisms for the BLM as conservation measures in land use plans (LUPs).

The Miles City RMP is one of the 15 LUP revisions and amendments and environmental impact statements being prepared by the BLM as part of the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy (BLM 2011).<sup>1</sup> These documents provide a set of management alternatives focused on specific conservation measures across the range of the GRSG (see **Figure ES-1**, Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy Boundaries).

Science-based decision-making and collaboration with state and federal partners are fundamental to the Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy. The 15 GRSG LUP/EISs address threats to GRSG identified by state fish and wildlife agencies, the BLM National Technical Team, and the USFWS in the context of its listing decision and the Conservation Objectives Team (COT) report. The COT report was prepared by wildlife biologists from state and federal agencies and provides a blueprint for the overall conservation approach set forth in the BLM GRSG LUP/EISs (USFWS 2013).<sup>2</sup> Where consistent with conservation objectives, the GRSG LUP/EISs adopt unique state and stakeholder developed approaches and priorities. Additional science-based reviews by the US Geological Survey and related scientific literature provided further guidance on specific issues that arose in developing the final BLM and Forest Service GRSG LUP/EISs. In addition, regular meetings with the Western Governors

<sup>1</sup> BLM (US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management). 2011. Instruction Memorandum 2012-044, BLM National. Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Planning Strategy. Washington, DC. December 27, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> USFWS (US Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service). 2013. Greater Sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Conservation Objectives: Final Report. USFWS, Denver, Colorado. February 2013.

Association Sage-Grouse Task Force provided additional opportunities for coordination with member states.<sup>3</sup>

### ES.1.2 Description of the Planning Area and Habitat Management Areas

The planning area is the geographic area within which the BLM will make decisions during this planning effort. The planning area boundary includes all lands, regardless of jurisdiction. The Miles City RMP planning area covers approximately 25.8 million acres of federal, state, and private lands in 17 Montana counties. Of the total area, approximately 2.75 million acres are BLM-administered surface lands and 10.6 million acres are BLM-administered mineral estate.

While the planning area consists of all lands regardless of ownership, decisions resulting from the Miles City RMP/EIS would apply only to BLM-administered lands, including surface and split-estate lands with BLM-administered subsurface

**Figure ES-1**



<sup>3</sup> The Western Governors Association Sage-Grouse Task Force works to identify and implement high priority conservation actions and integrate ongoing actions necessary to preclude the need for the GRSG to be listed under the ESA. The Task Force includes designees from the 11 western states where GRSG is found as well as representatives from USFWS, BLM, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Forest Service, US Geological Survey, and Department of the Interior.

mineral rights. **Chapter 3**, Affected Environment, describes the current resource and resource use conditions in the planning area.

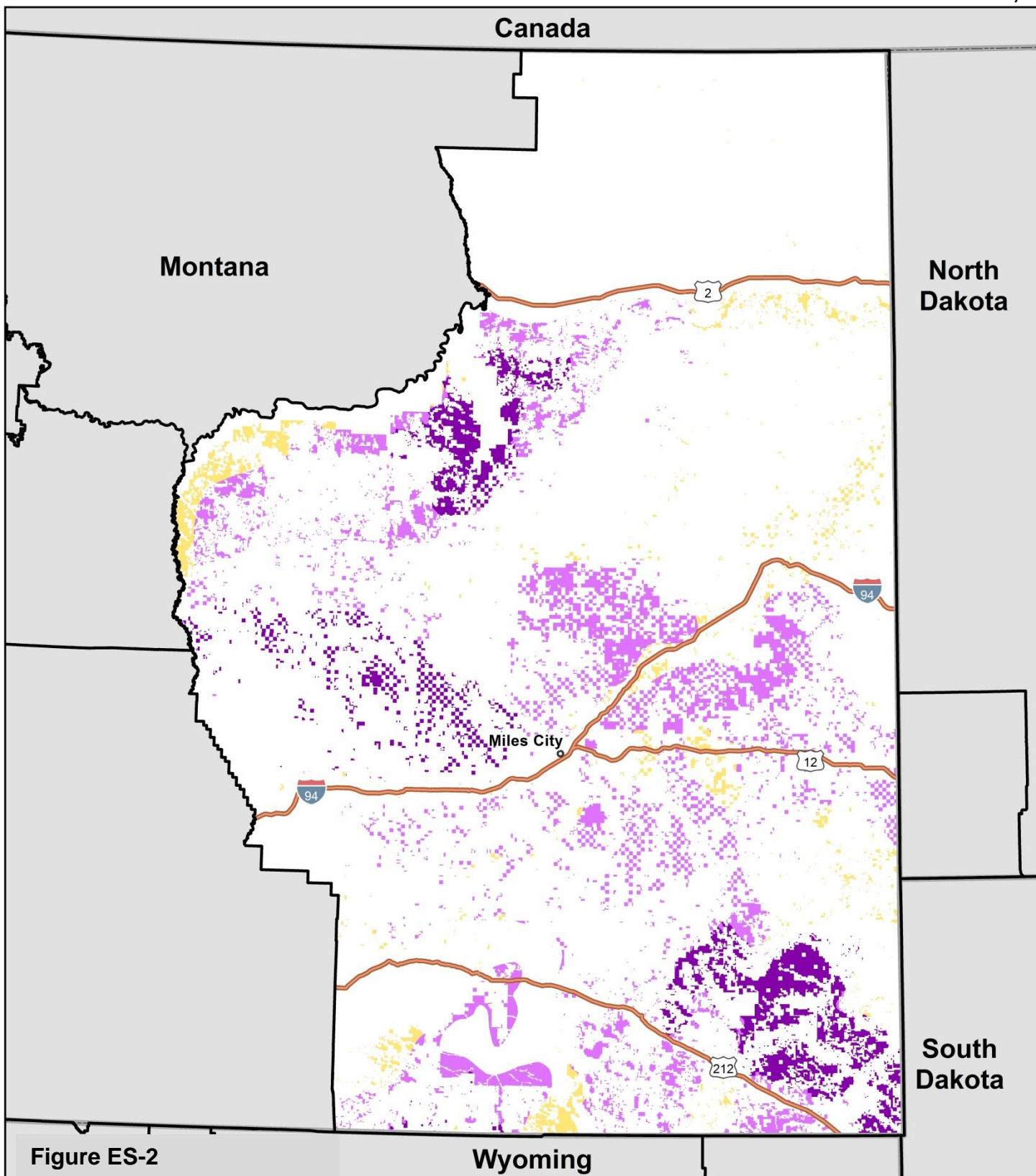
As part of the National Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Strategy, GRSG habitat on BLM-administered lands in the decision area consists of lands allocated as PHMA and GHMA (**Table ES-1**, Habitat Management Areas in the Miles City Planning Area, and **Figure ES-2**, Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas – Miles City RMP/EIS). PHMA and GHMA are defined as follows:

- PHMA (817,000 acres)—BLM-administered lands identified as having the highest value to maintaining sustainable GRSG populations. The boundaries and management strategies for PHMA are derived from and generally follow the Protection Priority Area boundaries identified in the Draft RMP/EIS. Areas of PHMA largely coincide with areas identified as Priority Areas for Conservation in the COT report.
- GHMA (1,441,000 acres)—BLM-administered lands that require some special management to sustain sage-grouse populations. The boundaries and management strategies for GHMA are derived from and generally follow the General Habitat Area boundaries identified in the Draft RMP/EIS.

The planning area includes other BLM-administered lands that are not allocated as habitat management areas for GRSG. These lands would be managed as described in **Chapter 2**.

**Table ES-1**  
**Habitat Management Areas in the Miles City Planning Area**







Habitat Management Area	Acres of BLM-Administered Lands	Percent of BLM-Administered in Planning Area
PHMA	817,000	30
GHMA	1,441,000	52
Other BLM-administered lands	493,500	18

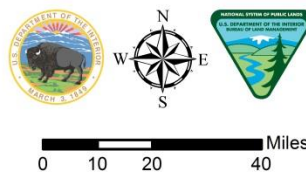


**Figure ES-2**

**Wyoming**

**Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Areas - Miles City RMP/EIS**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  BLM Priority Habitat Management Areas |  Private, State, and Other Federal Lands |
|  BLM General Habitat Management Areas  |  EIS Boundary                            |
|  Other BLM Lands                       |  State Boundary                          |



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregate use with other data is not guaranteed.

## **ES.2 PURPOSE AND NEED**

The purpose of the RMP revision is to provide a single, comprehensive land use plan to guide management of BLM-administered lands in the Miles City Field Office. The new RMP will address changing needs of the Planning Area and creates a management strategy that best achieves a combination of the following planning issues within the framework of the planning criteria described in the next section.

- Employing a community-based planning approach to seek broadly supported solutions to issues and collaborate with federal, state, and local cooperating agencies
- Establishing goals and objectives for managing resources and resource uses in the approximately 2.75 million surface acres and 10.6 million acres of BLM-administered mineral estate in the planning area administered by the BLM Miles City Field Office, in accordance with the principles of multiple use and sustained yield
- Identifying land use plan decisions to guide future land management actions and subsequent site-specific implementation decisions
- Identifying management actions and allowable uses anticipated to achieve the established goals and objectives and reach desired outcomes
- Providing comprehensive management direction by making land use decisions for all appropriate resources and resource uses the BLM administers in the planning area
- Providing for compliance with applicable tribal, federal, and state laws, standards, and implementation plans, and BLM policies and regulations
- Recognizing the nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber
- Identify and incorporate appropriate conservation measures to conserve, enhance, and restore GRS habitat by reducing, minimizing, or eliminating threats to that habitat
- Retaining flexibility to adapt to new and emerging issues and opportunities and to provide for adjustments to decisions over time, based on new information and monitoring
- Striving to be compatible with the plans and policies of adjacent local, state, tribal, and federal agencies and consistent with federal laws, regulations, and BLM policies and to be flexible enough to adapt to future BLM policy and guidance updates

The BLM currently administers public lands in the planning area according to the Big Dry (BLM 1996<sup>4</sup>) and Powder River RMPs (BLM 1985),<sup>5</sup> as amended. Although these existing plans have been updated since the BLM adopted them, new data have become available, and laws, regulations, and policies regarding management of these public lands have changed. In addition, decisions in the existing plan do not satisfactorily address all new and emerging issues in the planning area. These changes and potential deficiencies created the need to revise the existing plans.

This RMP is needed to respond to the USFWS's March 2010 warranted, but precluded ESA listing petition decision (75 *Federal Register* 13910, March 23, 2010). The USFWS identified inadequacy of regulatory mechanisms as a significant factor in its finding on the petition to list the GRSG. In its listing decision, the USFWS noted that changes in management of GRSG habitats are necessary to avoid the continued decline of GRSG populations. Changes in land allocations and conservation measures in BLM RMPs provide a means to implement regulatory mechanisms to address the inadequacy identified by the USFWS.

### **ES.3 PROPOSED ACTION**

The proposed federal action is the Proposed Plan, which identifies resource management alternatives for resolving issues, in accordance with the multiple-use and sustained yield mandates of FLPMA. The proposed plan is also intended to provide a consistent framework for managing GRSG and its habitat on BLM-administered land. The alternatives, including the Proposed Plan, comprise desired future outcomes, and a range of management actions, allowable uses, and land use allocations that guide management on BLM-administered lands. The Proposed Plan (see **Section ES.6**, Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management Proposed Plan and Environmental Effects) represents the agency's approach for addressing the purpose and need.

### **ES.4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE RMP/EIS**

#### **ES.4.1 Scoping**

A Notice of Intent (NOI) published in the *Federal Register* on February 4, 2005, formally announced the BLM's intent to revise the existing plans and to prepare the associated EIS. Publication of the NOI initiated the scoping process and invited affected and interested agencies, organizations, and the general public to participate in determining the scope and issues to be addressed by alternatives and analyses in the EIS.

The BLM held nine public scoping meetings during February and March 2005. The nine scoping meetings provided the public with an opportunity to learn and

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<sup>4</sup> BLM. 1996. Big Dry Resource Management Plan. Miles City, Montana.

<sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_. 1985. Powder River Resource Management Plan. Miles City, Montana.



ask questions about the project and the planning process and to submit their issues and concerns to the BLM. In addition to members of the BLM Interdisciplinary Team, a total of 199 people attended the scoping meetings. The BLM collected comments from the public during the scoping meetings and throughout the scoping period.

Also, on December 9, 2011, the BLM issued a NOI to plan for GRSG in the *Federal Register* and public scoping was conducted to identify issues. Those comments were taken into consideration in the preparation of the RMP. The final Scoping Summary Report, available online at <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/sagegrouse.html>, prepared in conjunction with all the GRSG LUPAs, summarizes the scoping and issue-identification process and describes 13 broad issue categories identified during the scoping process

#### **ES.4.2 Cooperating Agency Collaboration**

The BLM invited local, state, federal, and tribal representatives to participate as cooperating agencies on the Miles City RMP/EIS. The BLM invited these entities to participate because they have jurisdiction by law or because they could offer special expertise. Big Horn, Carter, Custer, Daniels, Fallon, Garfield, McCone, Powder River, Richland, Rosebud, Sheridan, and Treasure County Commissions, as well as six local conservation districts and one state grazing district agreed to participate as cooperating agencies in the RMP revision. Additionally, three Montana state agencies and three federal agencies accepted cooperating agency status. The BLM and cooperating agencies participated in a workshop to formulate alternatives and in meetings to keep cooperating agencies informed and to solicit their input. During development of this Proposed RMP/Final EIS, the BLM considered comments from cooperating agencies on the Draft RMP/EIS and previous administrative drafts.

The BLM also invited 17 Native American tribes to be cooperating entities as part of the RMP revision and conducted ongoing communication including letters, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings. Of those Native American tribes invited, the Fork Peck Tribes and Lower Brule Sioux Tribe participated as cooperating entities. The BLM sent tribal consultation letters to tribes on the status of the RMP revision process.

#### **ES.4.3 Development of the Draft RMP/EIS**

##### ***Development of Management Alternatives***

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Council on Environmental Quality implementing regulations (40 CFR, Part 1500), the BLM considered public input and developed a reasonable range of alternatives for the Draft RMP/EIS.

The planning team developed five unique alternatives, including one No Action Alternative (A) and four action alternatives (B through E), which were



subsequently analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS. Each of the alternatives was designed to:

- Address the eight planning issues
- Fulfill the purpose and need for the RMP/EIS
- Meet the multiple use and sustained yield mandate of the FLPMA
- Respond to USFWS-identified issues and threats to GRSG and its habitat, including specific threats identified in the COT report

Collectively, the four action alternatives (Alternatives B, C, D and E ) analyzed in the Draft RMP/EIS offered a range of possible management approaches for responding to the purpose and need as well as the planning issues and concerns identified through public scoping. While the overarching goal of the long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat is the same across alternatives, each alternative contains a discrete set of objectives and management actions, which if selected as the final plan, would constitute a unique RMP.

### ***Publication of Draft RMP/EIS***

#### *Public Comment Period*

The Notice of Availability (NOA) for the Miles City Draft RMP and Draft EIS was published in the *Federal Register* on March 8, 2013, initiating the 90-day public comment period. The BLM held eight public meetings in Sidney, Jordon, Ekalaka, Baker, Terry, Broadus, and Miles City, Montana, in May 2013. Written public comments were reviewed and considered by the BLM.

#### *Comment Analysis*

During the public comment periods, the BLM received 196 unique comment submissions via mail, e-mail, fax, and hand delivery, which contained hundreds of substantive comments. Comments covered a wide spectrum of thoughts, opinions, ideas, and concerns. Upon receipt, the BLM reviewed the comments, grouped similar substantive comments under an appropriate topic heading, and evaluated and wrote summary responses addressing the comment topics. The response indicated whether the commenters' points would result in new information or changes being included in the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. In many circumstances, public comments prompted such changes to the Draft RMP/EIS.

**Chapter 5**, Consultation and Coordination, describes the comment analysis methodology and an overview of the public comments received.

## **ES.5 RMP/EIS ALTERNATIVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

### **ES.5.1 Alternative A**

The No Action Alternative (A) represents continuation of current management and provides a baseline from which to identify potential environmental consequences when compared to the action alternatives. The No Action Alternative describes current resource and land management direction as represented in the Big Dry (BLM 1996) and Powder River (BLM 1985) RMPs as

amended and associated habitat management plans, maintenance actions, and updates.

Current management identifies constraints on mineral leasing and other activities in the planning area to protect resource values. Current management includes nine Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs); there are also WSAs, segments of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, and the Fort Union Historic Site National Historic Landmark that will continue to be managed in accordance with current policy. There are no wild and scenic river segments or backcountry byways. The BLM would maintain and emphasize recreation activities in three Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) under Alternative A and would allow livestock grazing on 2,700,000 acres. Current management includes stipulations and seasonal restrictions for surface-disturbing and disruptive activities to protect sensitive wildlife areas and other values that are incompatible with mineral resources activity.

The BLM would manage GRSG habitat uniformly throughout the planning area. For GRSG, recent research findings have provided updated and more accurate seasonal timing restrictions and expanded protection distances than those in Alternative A.

#### **ES.5.2 Alternative B**

Alternative B is based on the conservation measures developed by the BLM National Technical Team (NTT) planning effort, described in Instruction Memorandum No. WO-2012-044. As directed in the memorandum, the conservation measures developed by the NTT must be considered and analyzed, as appropriate, through the land use planning and NEPA processes by all BLM state and field offices that contain occupied GRSG habitat.

Alternative B would emphasize conservation of physical, biological, heritage and visual resources, and lands with wilderness characteristics with constraints on resource use. Alternative B would conserve the largest areas of land for physical, biological, and heritage resources, would designate an ACEC in PHMA for GRSG conservation, and would place a number of restrictions on motorized vehicle use and mineral development.

Alternative B retains the current Historic Landmark and Historic Trail designations. All lands with wilderness characteristics under Alternative B would be specifically managed to preserve their wilderness characteristics. The alternative also applies additional constraints on resource uses, compared with Alternative A. The BLM would designate more acres of SRMAs than Alternative A but would not designate any ERMAs. Under Alternative B, the BLM would reduce the area open to livestock grazing by approximately 200,000 acres. Renewable energy ROWs would be excluded on 95 percent of the BLM planning area.

This alternative would maintain contiguous blocks of vegetation and GRSG habitat on BLM-administered lands. Restrictions on surface-disturbing and disruptive activities in sensitive wildlife habitats are generally more prohibitive under Alternative B than the other alternatives, and the size of protective buffers is increased around areas of specific management concern, such as occupied GRSG leks. Designation of priority GRSG habitat under Alternative B would bring heightened attention to proposed management within the ACEC. Surface-disturbing activities in PHMA and GHMA would not be allowed, and PHMA would be recommended for withdrawal from locatable mineral entry.

### **ES.5.3 Alternative C**

Compared with Alternative A, Alternative C would emphasize conservation of physical, biological, heritage and visual resources, and lands with wilderness characteristics, with constraints on resource uses but to a lesser extent than Alternative B. Compared with Alternative B, Alternative C would conserve fewer areas for physical, biological, and heritage resources. Areas designated as SRMAs and ERMAs would be the same as Alternative B.

Alternative C would be more restrictive than Alternative A for motorized vehicle use and ROW and mineral development but would be less so than Alternative B. Renewable energy development would be avoided on 51 percent of the BLM planning area and would be excluded on 36 percent. The BLM would manage livestock use consistent with Alternative A. Alternative C would limit motorized vehicle use to designated roads and trails on all but 1,200 acres, 640 acres of which would be open and 550 would be closed. Surface-disturbing activities (including ROWs) would not be allowed on or within 3.1 miles of leks (with exceptions) in general habitat.

In PHMA, the BLM would authorize only one surface disturbance per 640 acres with a cumulative, direct, and indirect disturbance of no more than 3 percent of the sagebrush habitat per 640 acres from the point of the disturbance, as long as functional GRSG habitat and the associated populations were maintained at the same levels as trend areas. There would be no recommendations to withdrawal GRSG habitat from locatable mineral entry.

### **ES.5.4 Alternative D**

Management under Alternative D would generally be similar to Alternative C but would allow slightly more resource uses where the activity could be conducted in a manner that would conserve resource values. Alternative D would not designate SRMAs but would designate approximately 44,000 acres as ERMAs. Alternative D places constraints on resource uses. Activities allowed must meet certain requirements that would mitigate impacts on resource values. Under Alternative D, mineral resource uses are subject to less extensive constraints than under Alternative B but more than under Alternative A. Limitations on ROW development would be similar to Alternatives A and C. Limitations on renewable energy development would be similar to Alternative

C. Alternative D would not designate a GRSG ACEC. Alternative D limits motorized vehicle use to designated roads and trails, similar to Alternative C, but it would not close any areas and would allow cross-country travel on approximately 2,000 acres.

Compared to current management (Alternative A), Alternative D generally applies greater restrictions on surface disturbance and disruptive activities to protect sensitive wildlife habitats, including occupied GRSG leks. The BLM would limit disturbance to no more than 10 percent of the sagebrush habitat per 640 acres in PHMA and would prohibit surface-disturbing activities within 2 miles of GRSG leks within GHMA.

#### **ES.5.5 Alternative E (Proposed RMP)**

Management under Alternative E would include a blend of the management actions from Alternatives B, C, and D. Alternative E would provide more focused protections for GRSG, compared to Alternative A, such as the establishment of a 3 percent disturbance cap at the Biologically Significant Unit (BSU) and project scale. Alternative E manages disturbances (e.g., roads, oil and gas wells, pipelines, and ROWs) in PHMA to not exceed 3 percent of the total GRSG habitat. It requires beneficial reclamation and rehabilitation activities that prioritize reestablishment of native vegetation communities in sagebrush steppe communities. Alternative E would increase the amount of land conserved for physical, biological, and heritage and visual resources, while restricting mineral and wind energy development and ROWs.

Although an ACEC would not be designated for GRSG habitat conservation, Alternative E would exclude renewable energy ROWs in PHMA, would close PHMA to new mineral material sales, would apply NSO stipulations for fluid mineral leasing in PHMA, and would avoid major ROWs in PHMA and GHMA.

### **ES.6 GREATER SAGE-GROUSE HABITAT MANAGEMENT PROPOSED PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

In consideration of public comments, best science, cooperating agency coordination, and internal review of the Draft RMP/EIS, the BLM developed this Proposed Plan for Greater Sage-Grouse Habitat Management. The Proposed Plan represents the BLM's proposed approach for meeting the purpose and need consistent with the agencies' legal and policy mandates.

The BLM's Proposed Plan addresses threats to GRSG and its habitat identified by the USFWS in the March 2010 listing decision that apply to the Miles City planning area as well as threats described in the COT report. The Proposed Plan seeks to provide greater regulatory certainty for management actions intended to conserve the GRSG (**Table ES-2**, Key Components of the Miles City Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats). In making its determination of whether the GRSG is warranted to be listed as threatened or endangered under the ESA, the USFWS will evaluate the degree to which land

use planning decisions proposed in this RMP/FEIS address threats to GRSG and its habitat.

The Proposed Plan establishes conditions, subject to valid existing rights, for new anthropogenic activities to ensure a net conservation gain to GRSG and its habitat. The Proposed Plan would reduce habitat disturbance and fragmentation through specific limitations on surface-disturbing activities, while addressing changes in resource condition and use through monitoring and adaptive management. The Proposed Plan provides a framework for prioritizing areas in PHMA for wildfire, invasive annual grass, and conifer treatments, which would maintain and enhance GRSG habitat.

The Proposed Plan complements Montana's Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage-Grouse (Montana Sage Grouse Work Group 2005)<sup>6</sup> by establishing conservation measures to minimize habitat loss, particularly as a result of surface disturbance from energy exploration and development.

If the BLM finds that the State of Montana is implementing a GRSG habitat conservation program that is effectively conserving the GRSG, the BLM would review the management goals and objectives to determine if they were being met and whether amending the BLM Proposed Plan is appropriate to achieve consistent and effective conservation and GRSG management across all lands, regardless of ownership.

For a full description of the BLM's Proposed Plan, see **Chapter 2**, Alternative E.

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<sup>6</sup> Montana Sage Grouse Work Group. 2005. Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage-Grouse in Montana.

**Table ES-2**  
**Key Components of the Miles City Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats**

<b>Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)</b>	<b>Key Component of the Miles City Proposed Plan</b>
All threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement the Adaptive Management Plan, which allows for more restrictive land use allocations and management actions to be implemented if habitat or population hard triggers are met.</li> <li>• Require and ensure mitigation that provides a net conservation gain to GRSG.</li> <li>• Monitor implementation and effectiveness of conservation measures in GRSG habitats according to the Habitat Assessment Framework.</li> <li>• Apply buffers necessary based on project type and location to address impacts on leks when authorizing actions in GRSG habitat.</li> <li>• Apply Required Design Features (RDF) when authorizing actions in GRSG habitat.</li> <li>• Prioritize the leasing and development of fluid mineral resources outside GRSG habitat.</li> </ul>
All development threats, including mining, infrastructure, and energy development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Implement an anthropogenic disturbance cap of 3% at the Biologically Significant Unit (BSU) and project area scale.</li> <li>• PHMA: Implement a density cap of an average of 1 energy and mining facility per 640 acres.</li> </ul>
Energy development—fluid minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulation without waiver or modification, and with limited exception.</li> <li>• GHMA: Open to fluid mineral leasing subject to NSO within 0.6 miles and Controlled Surface Use (CSU) stipulation within 2 miles of an occupied lek.</li> </ul>
Energy development—wind energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Exclusion area (not available for wind energy development under any conditions)</li> <li>• GHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for wind energy development with special stipulations)</li> </ul>
Energy development—solar energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Exclusion area (not available for solar energy development under any conditions)</li> <li>• GHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for solar energy development with special stipulations)</li> </ul>
Infrastructure—Major ROWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for major ROWs with special stipulations)</li> <li>• GHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for major ROWs with special stipulations)</li> </ul>
Infrastructure—minor ROWs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Avoidance area (may be available for minor ROWs with special stipulations)</li> </ul>
Mining—locatable minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply RDFs to locatable minerals consistent with applicable law.</li> </ul>

**Table ES-2**  
**Key Components of the Miles City Proposed Plan Addressing COT Report Threats**

<b>Threats to GRSG and its Habitat (from COT Report)</b>	<b>Key Component of the Miles City Proposed Plan</b>
Mining—nonenergy leasable minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Closed area (not available for nonenergy leasable minerals)</li> </ul>
Mining—salable minerals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Closed area (not available for salable mineral development) with a limited exception (may remain open to free use permits and expansion of existing active pits if criteria are met)</li> </ul>
Mining—coal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA is essential habitat for GRSG for purposes of the suitability criteria set forth at 43 CFR 3461.5(o)(1).</li> </ul>
Livestock grazing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize the review and processing of grazing permits/leases in PHMA.</li> <li>• The NEPA analysis for renewals and modifications of grazing permits/leases will include specific management thresholds, based on the GRSG Habitat Objectives Table, Land Health Standards and ecological site potential to allow adjustments to grazing that have been subjected to NEPA analysis.</li> <li>• Prioritize field checks in PHMA to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of grazing permits.</li> </ul>
Free-roaming equid management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not applicable. Not present in the planning area.</li> </ul>
Range management structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow range improvements which do not impact GRSG, or which provide a conservation benefit to GRSG such as fences for protecting important seasonal habitats.</li> </ul>
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Do not construct new recreation facilities.</li> </ul>
Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Prioritize suppression immediately after life and property to conserve the habitat.</li> <li>• GHMA: Prioritize suppression where wildfires threaten PHMA.</li> </ul>
Nonnative, invasive plant species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat sites in PHMA and GHMA that contain invasive species infestations through an integrated pest management approach.</li> </ul>
Sagebrush removal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PHMA: Maintain a minimum of 70 percent of lands capable of producing sagebrush with 10 to 30 percent sagebrush canopy cover.</li> <li>• All BLM use authorizations will contain terms and conditions regarding the actions needed to meet or progress toward meeting the habitat objectives for GRSG.</li> </ul>
Pinyon and/or juniper expansion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove conifers encroaching into sagebrush habitats, prioritizing occupied GRSG habitat.</li> </ul>
Agricultural conversion and exurban development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GRSG habitat will be retained in federal management.</li> </ul>



## ES.7 SUMMARY

Since the release of the Draft Miles City RMP/EIS, the BLM has continued to work closely with a broad range of governmental partners, including the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, the USFWS and USGS in DOI, Indian tribes, governors, state agencies, and county commissioners. Through this cooperation, the BLM has developed the Proposed Plan that, in accordance with applicable law, achieves the long-term conservation of GRSG and its habitat.

Conservation of the GRSG is a large-scale challenge that requires a landscape-scale solution that spans 11 western states. The Miles City RMP/EIS would achieve the consistent, range-wide conservation objectives, as outlined below. Additionally, the Miles City RMP/EIS would align with the State of Montana's priorities and land management approaches, consistent with conservation of GRSG.

**Minimize additional surface disturbance.** The most effective way to conserve the GRSG is to protect existing intact habitat. The BLM would aim to reduce habitat fragmentation and protect key habitat. The Miles City RMP/EIS would minimize surface disturbance on approximately 2,258,000 acres of BLM-administered lands by allocating lands as PHMA and GHMA with decisions that aim to conserve GRSG habitat.

The limitations on mineral and ROW development, along with the disturbance cap, lek buffers, and adaptive management, would result in a net conservation gain for GRSG. The Proposed RMP/FEIS prioritizes oil and gas development outside of GRSG habitat and focuses on a landscape-scale approach to conserving GRSG habitat. In the context of the planning area, land use allocations under the Proposed RMP/FEIS would limit or eliminate new surface disturbances in PHMA, while minimizing disturbance in GHMA.

**Improve habitat condition.** While restoring lost sagebrush habitat can be very difficult in the short term, particularly in the most arid areas, it is often possible to enhance habitat quality through purposeful management. The Miles City RMP/EIS commits to management actions necessary to achieve science-based vegetation and GRSG habitat management objectives established in the Proposed Plan.

Habitat restoration and vegetation management actions would improve GRSG habitat and prioritize restoration to benefit GRSG habitat areas. As a result, the restoration and management of vegetation actions would focus on GRSG.

**Reduce threat of rangeland fire to sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat.**

Rangeland fire can destroy sagebrush habitats. The Miles City RMP/EIS incorporates Secretarial Order 3336 and sets forth protocols to improve the BLM's ability to protect GRSG habitat from damaging wildfire. Prescribed fire would be used only to improve or maintain habitat for GRSG and to meet specific fuels objective standards.

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